



# Adult Ed Dec 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2007

## The Marketing of Religions

Preamble: In this discussion we will build on our previous discussions and tackle the issue of why Judaism continues to be important and relevant. We will talk about why religions in general continue to be such a critical force in the world.

Marketing is defined as the social process of identifying consumers' needs and positioning a product or service to meet those needs. Marketing may also include shaping or molding consumer perceptions of their needs toward a particular product or service.

My thesis is that religion fills certain intrinsic needs in humanity. The reference is drawn from St. Augustine (I believe) but has been popularized by poets and now Christian rock bands: "*Our hearts have a God-shaped hole in them, that only God can fill.*" I am more inclined to accept the idea proposed by psychologist Carl Jung of archetypes. Jung believed that mankind shares a collective unconscious consisting of images and symbols that are effectively hard-wired into our brains. You can think of these as being instinctual.

"According to Swiss psychologist Carl Jung, archetypes are innate universal psychic dispositions that form the substrate from which the basic themes of human life emerge. Being universal and innate, their influence can be detected in the form of myths, symbols, rituals and instincts of human beings. Archetypes are components of the collective unconscious and serve to organize, direct and inform human thought and behavior

According to Jung, archetypes heavily influence the human life cycle, propelling a neurologically hard-wired sequence which he called the stages of life. Each stage is mediated through a new set of archetypal imperatives which seek fulfillment in action. These may include being parented, initiation, courtship, marriage and preparation for death. <sup>1</sup>

The degree to which a religion aligns with these archetypes is proportional to the degree that religion will be accepted. And that is the marketing of religions.

There is a transactional nature to religion. Religion fulfills certain needs, but also has requirements. You are required to fulfill certain obligations in order to have your needs met. There are requirements for worship and for conduct that are imposed, sacrifices to be made.

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<sup>1</sup> Stevens, Anthony in 'The archetypes'(Chapter 3.)Papadopoulos, Renos ed.(2006)The Handbook of Jungian Psychology

Recap: In our first meeting I offered the idea that Judaism has been at one time or another, a racial (or tribal or familial) designation, a national designation, a religion and a culture and that all of these have been true at those times.

We talked about how a group of people or peoples moved south from Sumeria, modern day Iraq and Iran, into a Canaan. Canaan is the strip of land between the great empires of the north (including Babylon and Assyria) and the great civilization to the south, Egypt. To the East is Jordanian desert and to the West is the Mediterranean Sea.

This central location meant that the people living there would be exposed to a great variety of ideas and thoughts. It also meant that they would suffer from military attacks by the Egyptians, Assyrians, Babylonians, Greeks, Romans, etc. Those events shape our history and religion.

We began by looking at the etymology of certain words in the Bible, “Adam” and “Eden” in particular, which have roots in Sumerian culture. That is how we established the earliest antecedents. We accept the story that the Abrahamic peoples came from Ur, the city of the Chaldeans in Mesopotamia, part of the culture known as Sumeria, because there is a supporting linguistic and cultural connection. We saw that a great many peoples (Midianites and Edomites and all the others) came down as part of a mass migration, maybe 6000 years ago. The commonly accepted designation for the land they would live in is Canaan and we can refer to the group as the Canaanite peoples. More than one of these peoples was monotheistic, according to the Bible. (Moses dwelled in Midian, for example, and learned from Jethro.)

What was the nature of the transactional relationship at this early time? The story of Abraham and Isaac spells it out. Abraham is willing to sacrifice Isaac and Isaac willing to be sacrificed. But the sacrifice of a child is not required. Belief in one God and the sacrifice of a ram given to them (and male circumcision) is all that is required. Bear in mind that a lot of religions DID require the occasional sacrifice of a child. There is to that practice in the Bible. The king of Moab is said to have sacrificed his firstborn son and Ammonites to have sacrificed children to the god Moloch as well. Not having to kill your children to appease the gods may well have been a big thing. In exchange for belief and the sacrifice of some livestock, Abraham and Isaac and their descendants are given fertile land, a land of milk and honey.

This is a powerful promise for nomadic shepherds. It meets their needs and requires less from them in exchange than the other religions at this time.

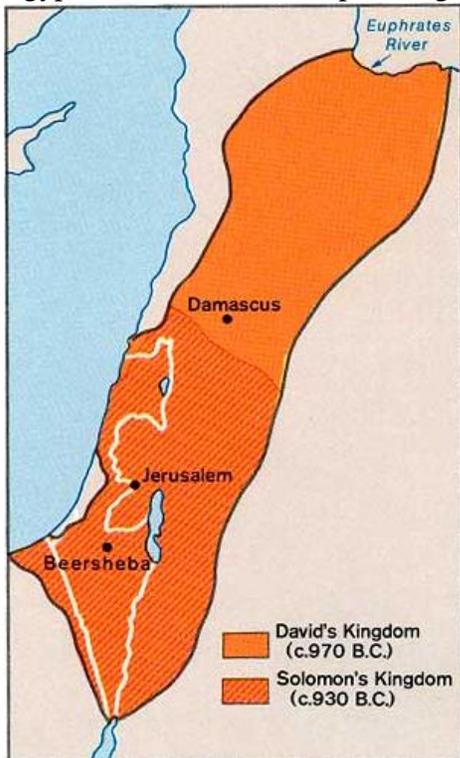
Perhaps 3500 years ago, a group of these people migrated into Egypt. They were impelled by either a famine or fleeing ahead of the Hyksos invasion from Asia or a combination of the two. They would live in Egypt for maybe 200 to 400 years. In the event known as the Exodus, they would return to the land of Canaan. We watched the movie “The Exodus Decoded” but it should also be noted that some authors dispute the idea of a mass migration, instead asserting that it was a more gradual movement of people over time.

During the time that they lived in Egypt, they came in contact with Egyptian beliefs and philosophies. These beliefs included a form of monotheism, the worship of Aten as practiced by the Pharaoh Akhenaton. It is only reasonable to think that there was mutual influence and an exchange of ideas.

The story of the Exodus includes a conflict between Moses and Aaron, the worship of the Golden Calf at the very time that Moses is bringing down the Ten Commandments. Is this a parable of a conflict between the new, Egyptian influenced religion and the older Canaanite worship? The story includes a civil war with 3,000 casualties, the death of Aaron's two sons and the eventual acceptance of Aaron as a high priest, co-equal with Moses in the ability to make sacrifice.

Religion for these people, prior to the receiving of the Ten Commandments, is more about burnt offerings made to placate and honor God, than about a moral code. This theme of sacrifice is central to the stories of Cain and Abel and of Abraham and Isaac and for Moses and Aaron as well. But only certain people have to make these sacrifices. Until the Ten Commandments, most people don't have to follow a very detailed set of rules because those rules haven't been written yet. Of the Ten Commandments, eight are prohibitions and two are very general rules. (Keep the Sabbath and honor your parents and you are good to go.)

Again, we see an appealing transactional relationship. The requirements are exclusive worship of God ("I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery; you shall have no other gods before me") and keeping the Sabbath and following the tribal elders. In exchange, the people are freed from slavery Egypt, delivered from the pursuing army and fed in the desert



Once they reenter Canaan, these Hebrews (a linguistic designation meaning that the Twelve Tribes all spoke the same language) begin the military conquest of the land. The Book of Judges recounts their struggles against a variety of peoples. They will find that a new people have arrived and occupied the coastal region. The Judge, Samson, will fight against these Philistines.

The Philistines (from *plishtim* or invaders) are thought by modern archeologists to have originated in Mycenaean Greece. We know from evidence that Greece and Crete had trade with Egypt. Again, we have a robust culture that presumably exerted an influence, if only by what we rejected. The conflict with the Philistines forces the Hebrew tribes to accept a central leadership, first Saul, then David and Solomon.

This is between 400 to 600 years after the Exodus. The Hebrews are no longer a longer a loose agglomeration of tribes. Now we have a major kingdom existing between two of the great civilizations of the world and in contact with a third across the sea. It may be assumed that along with the trade goods, ideas flowed through this central location. Their society has grown in complexity and their religion reflects this.

What has the transactional relationship become at this point? “Follow all of my commands and you will be victorious in war and given good land and spoils. Don’t do what I tell you and other people will conquer you and bad things will happen.” These were people living in a hotly contested land. They warred and killed people, they were not above genocide. Think of the story of Amalek<sup>2</sup>, king of an Edomite people descended from Esau. These were distant cousins, in a sense. The Amalekites harassed the Hebrews fleeing Egypt who passed through their lands and were to have been exterminated, even to their livestock being killed. Exodus 17 says:

*"8 Then Amalek came and fought with Israel at Rephidim. 9 So Moses said to Joshua, "Choose for us men, and go out and fight with Amalek. Tomorrow I will stand on the top of the hill with the staff of God in my hand." 10 So Joshua did as Moses told him, and fought with Amalek, while Moses, Aaron, and Hur went up to the top of the hill. 11 Whenever Moses held up his hand, Israel prevailed, and whenever he lowered his hand, Amalek prevailed. 12 But Moses' hands grew weary, so they took a stone and put it under him, and he sat on it, while Aaron and Hur held up his hands, one on one side, and the other on the other side. So his hands were steady until the going down of the sun. 13 And Joshua overwhelmed Amalek and his people with the sword. 14 Then the Lord said to Moses, "Write this as a memorial in a book and recite it in the ears of Joshua, that I will utterly blot out the memory of Amalek from under heaven." 15 And Moses built an altar and called the name of it, The Lord is my banner, 16 saying, "A hand upon the throne of the Lord! The Lord will have war with Amalek from generation to generation."*

Saul fails to follow the command, sparing some livestock and presumably allowing a child to survive. Saul will lose his throne over this and the kingship will pass to the line of David. The failure to kill all the Amalekites results in Haman of the Purim tale, who is called “the Agagite,” which is interpreted as being a descendant of the Amalekite king Agag.

David is a successful military leader and expands the conquered territory to extend from Sinai (bordering Egypt in the South) through modern day Syria in the North (bordering the lands of Babylon.)

The allure of this marketing message is clear. The demands are greater, but so are the rewards. Jerusalem will become a great city of the Hebrews, who will have power over many peoples. But it only lasts as long as you gain military victories.

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<sup>2</sup> <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Amalek>

From the time of David, there are not one, but two high priests. Solomon builds the first Temple, centralizing worship (and sacrifice) in one place. But after Solomon's time, the nation divides along tribal and religious line into Judea and Israel. The priest in the North are of the line of Aaron and perhaps closer to the original Canaanite worship, while the priests in the South claim authority from the line of Moses and have presumably more of an Egyptian influence. Each land will begin to compose its own Bible, written or perhaps collated by authors known as "E" for the use of the name Elohim for the deity and "J" for the use of the name Jehovah. The two Bibles are not that different and will later be combined.

Once the land is divided into the two kingdoms, the military empire begins to falter. The South is invaded by Egyptian armies; the North is conquered by Assyrians and Babylonians. Even the Ark of the Covenant is taken. There are periods where paganism returns. God is taken to have withdrawn his blessings. It should be noted that there are no recorded periods of atheism, again reinforcing the concept that people have a need for God or gods. Prayer and sacrifice, making a "deal" with the powers that be, continues to be a part of life.

In 586 BCE Babylon conquers Judea, destroys the Temple and the first Diaspora commences. The Hebrew upper classes are taken to Babylon and will come in contact with new beliefs. Before they are returned to their lands, Babylon will be conquered by the Persians. This is not only a historical event, it is a religious one. Cyrus the Great, the King of the Persians who ends the exile and permits the rebuilding of the Temple is a figure in the Bible.

**Isaiah 44:28** "It is I who says of Cyrus, 'He is My shepherd! And he will perform all My desire.' And he declares of Jerusalem, 'She will be built,' And of the temple, 'Your foundation will be laid.'"

This is a profound change in the philosophy. We now have a figure NOT of the line of Abraham who has been chosen by God to play a major part. More than fifty years of dwelling outside the land Canaan has changed their view of the world. God is no longer just the God of Abraham.

The Persians were followers of the prophet Zoroaster. There is considerable debate as to when Zoroaster may have lived, with dates spanning from 10,000 BCE to 600 BCE. Regardless, the Persian Empire would, at its peak, span the area from India on the Eastern border to Macedon on the West. The empire would spread the ideas of Zoroastrianism far and wide.

Zoroastrianism is much more of an Eastern religion, than a Western one. The god of Zoroastrianism, Ahura Mazda, is the "uncreated creator" more of a prime creator than an interactive deity like the God of the Hebrews. There is a struggle taking place between "asha" meaning truth or order and "druj" or lies or chaos. Mankind has freewill to choose which path to follow.

Exposure to Zoroastrianism changed the beliefs of those Hebrews in exile. When their children and grandchildren returned they would bring back the concepts of an afterlife, of a struggle between good and evil and of everyman's choice or freewill.

Not all the Hebrews had gone into exile in Babylon and not all adopted these new beliefs. There would be considerable resistance to the new beliefs and change over the next four hundred years. But the idea that religion and, by extension morality, was something that impacted every persons' daily life had come to stay.

The multiple versions of the Bible and supplementary texts were beginning to be compiled at this time. While the priests and the nobility controlled the Temple, people from the lower classes were doing the actual writing and studying the resultant work. The time of the sages, the scribes, had come to stay. There were many different philosophies and groups competing at this time. The best known are the Pharisees.

There would now be a written, codified set of moral laws that people were expected to follow in order to be considered righteous. The Pharisees would author the Mishnah, the written form of what had been the Oral Law.

The nature of the transactional relationship had changed. There was now a set of laws to follow that governed many aspects of everyday life. The reward for following these laws was not in fertile grazing ground or victory in war, but would be found in the afterlife. Those who were spiritually pure would have eternal life. This is the beginning of Rabbinic Judaism and of modern religion.

This is a very powerful marketing message, not only because the promise is so great, but because it is impossible to disprove.

In 322 BCE Alexander the Great would conquer the Persian Empire including Jerusalem and the period of Hellenism would begin. Alexander would die in 323 BCE and his empire would be divided into three parts, each governed by one of his generals. First Jerusalem would be governed by the Ptolemaic kings of Egypt. Judaism would spread into Egypt and the continuing work of assembling the Bible would take place in Alexandria. One of the Ptolemaic kings would have the Bible translated into Greek. Philo of Alexandria is a Jewish Greek philosopher.

In 198 BCE the Seleucid kings would conquer Jerusalem from the Ptolemaic kings. Seleucus, another of Alexander's generals had been given domain over Babylon and the eastern portion of what had been the Persian empire, stretching all the way to India. His heirs would extend their empire west, conquering Syria, Arabia, and Jerusalem and even further into European Thrace and Macedon. This would create a melting pot of peoples and ideas.

Hellenist ideas and philosophy would enter and mix with Judaic ideas, creating what is known as Hellenistic Judaism. For some, this would be only a token change in the form

of dress and language. Others would reinterpret Judaism in a different manner, so as to support a hedonistic lifestyle.

We tend to focus on the forced introduction of Hellenistic ideas into Jewish culture and the resistance to these changes, culminating in the revolt of the Maccabees. But the converse was also true, the ideas of the Pharisees mixed in part with Greek philosophy spread into Syria, with Antioch as one center, and even further into Greece.

As appealing as Judaism was, there were two major drawbacks. The first was the dietary laws and the second was circumcision. From a marketing standpoint, these requirements would stop Judaism from gaining converts, especially adult male converts. But that objection was not one that would have been of concern to Jews. Judaism was intended only for the descendants of Abraham.

The origins of circumcision are worth examining. Genesis 16 says "As for you, you shall keep my covenant, you and your offspring after you throughout their generations. This is my covenant, which you shall keep, between me and you and your offspring after you: Every male among you shall be circumcised. You shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskins, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and you. Throughout your generations every male among you shall be circumcised when he is eight days old, including the slave born in your house and the one bought with your money from any foreigner who is not of your offspring. Both the slave born in your house and the one bought with your money must be circumcised. So shall my covenant be in your flesh an everlasting covenant. Any uncircumcised male who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin shall be cut off from his people; he has broken my covenant."

The importance of the spread of Jewish ideas and the translation of the Bible into Greek and these two objections is that they combine to create a fertile ground for the spread of Christianity.

Meanwhile, back in Judea, in 175 BCE a civil war would break out. The High Priest Simon II died and war broke out between his two sons, Orias III who was anti-Hellenization and pro-Ptolemy and Jason, who was pro-Hellenization and pro- Seleucid. The Seleucid king Antiochus IV would invade Jerusalem and sack the Temple. This in turn led to the revolt of the Maccabees, who would eventually drive the Seleucids out. The revolt lasted from 167 BCE to 142 BCE. Jonathan Maccabee, the last surviving son of Mattathias, was both High Priest and general and would found the Hasmonean dynasty. He would replace the priestly class and the new priests would take the name Sadducees, possibly a reference to the first high priest, Saddok. We would consider them ultra-conservative today.

The Sadducees would reject anything that smacked of a foreign influence, not only Hellenistic Judaism but also the practices of the Pharisees. They rejected the Mishnah, the oral tradition. The conflict between the Sadducees and the Pharisees was not only a conflict of religious beliefs, but also a conflict of class and politics. When, during the rebellion, Judah Maccabee conquered the land of Edomites or Idumaea as it was called,

the Sadducees forced the people there to convert to Judaism. It was from this people that the family of Herod the Great would come.

The Sadducees had a certain appeal after generations of foreign dominance with the message of a return to the Mosaic roots of Judaism, the days of the first High Priest and also of military might.

Many Jews did not accept the Sadducees as legitimate high priests. One group that removed themselves from Jerusalem was the Essenes. They not only rejected the Sadducees, they rejected the legitimacy of the Second Temple, built as it was under Persian auspices. The Essenes believed their community was itself the new Temple, and that obedience to the law represented a new form of sacrifice.

The marketing message of the Essenes was that they do not need what they cannot have anyway. They were ascetics who deliberately chose to build their community in the wilderness. Some of the Essenes eschewed the “comforts” of Qumran to live in nearby caves.

These internal conflicts among Jews continued even after the Roman conquest in 63 BCE. Imagine how distressing it was to the people who thought of themselves as the Chosen of God to be conquered by the Romans eighty years after freeing themselves from the Greeks. Palestine, as the Romans called the region that they had conquered, became a hotbed of resistance and rebellion. One area worthy of mention in particular was the north of Israel, the area known as Galilee.

The Pharisees had often preached in the northern countryside. At the turn of the millennium, a scribe Judah of Galilee began the Zealot movement. The principles of the Zealots were:

1. God is the only legitimate ruler.
2. The time when God would reassert his dominance over the earth was nigh.
3. The people must rise up to destroy God’s enemies.

The Zealots were fanatics dedicated to the overthrow of the Romans. They believed that killing a godless man was the equivalent of making a sacrifice in Temple. If a Zealot died fighting for God, he would receive his reward in Heaven. They had no fear of torture, believing that suffering was a form of purification. Suicide was preferable to capture.

It was among this climate that Joshua or Yashua, whose name in Greek would be Jesus, would be born.

In 66 CE, the Zealots would incite a general uprising against Rome. Fighting a guerilla style war for years, they would eventually be joined by the priests in Jerusalem, who would refuse to accept offerings to God made by the Emperor. The people of the city would rise up and attack the Roman soldiers. The Roman governor would be forced to flee. The leader of the Zealots, Menachem the son of Judah of Galilee, would conquer the

Roman fortress at Masada and then enter the city of Jerusalem in triumph. His followers would kill all the Roman soldiers remaining in Jerusalem. Menachem and his followers believed that he was the ordained Messiah.

When Menachem entered the Temple, he would be murdered by the Temple guard, effectively ending the rebellion and the Zealot movement.

The difference between the faithful and the fanatical is a matter of perspective. The inevitable result of the Zealot revolt was the destruction of the Temple and of the city of Jerusalem. Casualties may have been as many as one million, certainly in the hundreds of thousands. How could they have thought that it would end otherwise? On the other hand, is living under the rule of a foreign oppressor an acceptable alternative?

Not everyone accepted the idea that victory had to be military. As mentioned before, Jesus was born at the same time and the same area where the Zealot movement had formed. Jesus preached non-violent resistance.

Sermon on the Mount was clearly intended as a response to both the Essenes and the Zealots. When confronted with evil, Jesus urges good as a response. "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy. 'But I say to you, love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you.'"

Not much is known about the historical Jesus. The two major works that reference his life, authored by Tacitus and Josephus, contain sections that may well have been rewritten, at least in part. Alternative accounts of the life and death of Jesus, the so-called Gnostic Gospels, were deemed heretical and destroyed. Amazingly copies were found in 1945 in a buried urn in Nag Hammadi. If accepted as authentic, they tell a very different story. The Gospel of Mary Magdalene, for example, says that Jesus was not resurrected, but appeared to her as a ghost.

We do know that there were some among the early Christians known as the Pillars of Jesus and counting among their supporters James the brother of Jesus, who believed that Christians must follow the rules of traditional Judaism, including circumcision. Adhering to these principles had won the support of some Pharisees. In approximately 50 CE, at the Council of Jerusalem, Paul of Tarsus returned from his proselytizing to argue against The Pillars and was successful.

Lowering the bar for conversion won the early Christians many converts among people who had already been exposed to Judaism, but were not willing to accept circumcision in order to convert. This was a powerful marketing move by a masterful marketer. By this one decision, Christianity had attained a critical mass. The martyrdom of early Christians would begin to wear resistance in the Roman Empire, gaining converts even among the Roman upper classes.

By the time of the First Council of Nicea, convened by the Emperor Constantine in 325 CE, Christianity was the state religion of Rome. As Christianity spread through the

world, the Church showed a willingness to incorporate the symbols and myths of the pagans. Incorporate the beliefs of Mithraism and the rebirth deities? Great. Change the date of the birth of Jesus to match the winter solstice? Fine. Add the pine tree and mistletoe symbols of the Vikings and Germanic tribes? No problem. You like the Eostre celebration of the Anglo-Saxon tribes? We got too.

This is in stark contrast to the unalterable stance of the Jews. There is a real philosophical difference. Traditional Judaism is focused on the prescriptions and the prohibitions of the Torah and the Talmud. Maimonides' Mishneh Torah is a perfect example. Christianity is more focused on belief, accepting Jesus in one's heart. Another example is the difference in attitude toward sin and redemption. Christianity says that if you lead a life of sin but are sincerely contrite at the very end, you can gain entrance to Heaven. That is the parable of the Two Thieves crucified alongside Jesus. Or take the story of the Emperor Constantine, who accepts baptism on his deathbed. Judaism is quite different. That is why you never hear of someone converting to Judaism on Death Row.

If you grant that a large number of people in the world are sinners, you can see the appeal

For 600 years there was no real challenge to Christianity. Then Muhammad met an angel in the desert.

Islam is the perfect religion for a warrior people, living in the inhospitable Arabian desert. Muhammad was not a pacifist; in fact he led his warriors into battle. He attacked a caravan coming out of his home city of Mecca with intent to pillage it. He ordered all the Jewish men of Medina beheaded as an object lesson and took a 12-year old girl of the tribe as a concubine. These events are recorded in the Quran and supported by independent historical records. We find this type of behavior despicable, but it was admirable among the Arabs of his time.

A Muslim demonstrates Islam or submission to the will of God by fulfilling the obligations known as the Pillars of Islam.

The Sunnis believe that there are five pillars: Shahadah (profession of faith), Salah (ritual prayer), Zakah (alms tax), Sawm (fasting during Ramadan), and Hajj (pilgrimage to Mecca).

Adherents to Shi'a Islam believe that these five pillars are important, but even more important are "Khums" which is a tax like Zakat and is for the descendants of Fatima and Ali, next is jihad, which is also important to the Sunni, but not considered a pillar. The third is Amr-Bil-Ma'ruf, the "Enjoining to Do Good", which calls for every Muslim to live a virtuous life and to encourage others to do the same. The fourth is Nahi-Anil-Munkar, the "Exhortation to Desist from Evil", which tells Muslims to refrain from vice and from evil actions and to encourage others to do the same.

Conversion to Islam requires conformance to a simple and comprehensible code of behavior. That is why Islam is the fastest growing religion in the world. The message is

clear and easy to understand and the discipline is fulfilling for many people. It's all about the marketing.